

Cardiff Council

Mid Year Complaints Report 2021/22



Reason for this report

To report to senior management and Informal Cabinet on the operation of the corporate complaints procedure between 1st April 2021 and 30th September 2021. The statistics for corporate complaints are set out by service area.

By way of background, in 2019 the Ombudsman gained new powers under the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Act 2019, this received Royal Assent in May 2019. Part of the act detailed a commitment for Local Authorities to report on complaints to senior management twice a year.

Going forward, the Local Authority will continue to provide its comprehensive Annual Complaints Report every year to Cabinet. However, a second report will be provided to Informal Cabinet, covering the first six months of the year.

The following report details corporate complaints only. There are separate processes for dealing with social services complaints, Elected Member conduct concerns and school complaints.

In order to allow comparisons the report details complaint data covering the previous financial year – 2020/21.

A complaint is defined within the Council as:

“An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, action or lack of action by the Council, or its staff, affecting an individual customer or group of customers.”

Complaints recorded under the corporate complaints procedure do not include ‘first time’ representations which are effectively requests for a service and dealt with as such. A new report of a pothole or a missed bin for example, would not be registered as a complaint, but as a request for service. Of course, in the event that we failed to respond to the ‘request’ appropriately, then that may generate a complaint.

The aim of every complaint investigation is to “investigate once, investigate well”. Advice is provided to the complainant should they then remain dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint – to contact the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.



Complaints breakdown for Cardiff Council

A total of 2,248 complaints have been recorded so far during 2021/22.

Year	Number of complaints
2021/22 (Q1 & Q2 only)	2,248
2020-21	2,537
2019-20	2,859
2018-19	2,550

A breakdown of the number of complaints received by service area can be found below.

Service Area	Number of complaints 2020/21	Number of complaints Q1 + Q2 2021/22
Waste	1,479	1,540
Housing	433	293
Highways, Traffic & Transport	147	130
Revenues	103	79
Parks & Harbour Authority	129	59
Education	39	43
Environmental Enforcement	60	28
Planning	23	26
Customer & Digital Services	66	25
Governance & Legal Services	2	13
Economic Development	25	12
Total	2,537	2,248

NB Complaints for Social Services are recorded under their statutory complaints procedure rather than the corporate complaints procedure. The figures for Social Services so far during 2021/22 can be found below.

Service Area	Number of complaints 2020/21	Number of complaints Q1 + Q2 2021/22
Adult Services	64	57
Childrens Services	140	117



Priorities

During the next six to eight months, the Council will be implementing a council-wide complaints and correspondence system. The designated project team have considered 3 proof of concepts with the aim of having the preferred solution identified by the end of the year. Implementation of the new solution would then take place between January 2022 and May 2022.

The new platform will provide additional functionality which can be harnessed to improve performance in the following areas.

✓ Complaints training

As part of the roll out and embedding of the council-wide complaints system, a central SharePoint site will be created so that staff will be able to access all supporting information, including training information, guidance documents and frequently asked questions. Specific training will be made available for all staff and will include:

- ✓ The new process to manage complaints, compliments and enquiries
- ✓ How to use the new solution
- ✓ Clear definition information for complaints, compliments and enquiries.
- ✓ Recording and reporting standards required to ensure corporate consistency

✓ Complaints handling

Complaints handling across the Council can vary. Having a central database will mean a move towards improved consistency of data entry across the organisation. It will also enable the Council to implement a tracking system for lessons learnt and monitoring how these improvements to the service areas are embedded into existing routines/policies.

✓ Improved complaints reporting and recording

We are confident that the implementation of the council-wide system will lead to further improvements when it comes to recording and reporting on complaints received by Cardiff Council. There is also a pressing need to meet the requirements of the Complaints Standards Authority (CSA). The CSA was created under the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) 2019 Act and part of the CSA's duty is to collect and publish specific data from local authorities. A central complaints repository will help us greatly in this regard and emphasises the importance of a council-wide repository for complaints that can produce council-wide data quickly.

